

# NON-NATIVE AND NATIVE TEACHERS IN ESP: THE USE OF SIMULATION CASES IN THE CLASS

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In the course of their work NNTs face certain disadvantages in comparison to NTs; however, courses can be structured to promote activities where these can be minimised. When helping students to improve their communication abilities ESP teachers find it necessary to surmount the obstacles of using a foreign language as the main tool in the class, and the lack of a defining knowledge in the students' specialist field. The setting of simulation cases allows students to work in an autonomous manner in their field of expertise and, as the students are asked to present their final proposals in English, this setting also gives them the opportunity to improve their command of the language.

This article makes reference to the specific activities proposed to our students and reports on the results of applying simulation exercises in different fields. To our own experience as NNTs from the Polytechnic University we add the examples of simulation provided by our PhD students, NTs with whom we have been working in a methodology workshop. We all teach English at the university but do it in different fields ranging from Architecture to Law.

Our proposal is thought to serve a multipurpose as it has a dual aim: to provide relevant information in English to our students and also, to make them apply the knowledge acquired to their main field of study.

**Keywords:** Non-Nativeness, Class Methodology, Communication Strategies, Interaction, Simulation And Case Studies.

## 1. Theoretical Framework

In an article on the differences between NTs and NNTs, Nayar (1994: 2) states that non native speakers are often regarded as language deprived, error prone, unreliable speakers in terms of language competence and socio-pragmatically ungraceful when compared to native speakers, who have phonological, linguistic, and communicative competence as well as linguistic identity. After reading this it was a relief to see that other authors were not quite so scathing. Medgyes, for instance, considers that non native-speaking teachers have a 'bright' side as well (1994: 51). He points out that, even if non native-speakers normally use bookish language and speak in a less confident way, they are more empathetic, attend to the student's real needs, show more commitment, have realistic expectations of the students and are more insightful (1994: 58-59). The presenters have found that there are also class activities that can yield similar results, whether performed by NTs or NNTs. One such activity is the use of simulation exercises that we (NNTs) and our PhD students (NTs) used during the last academic year with analogous effects.

As most people know well, in today's business world the trend towards globalisation and the need for communication on this scale necessitates trans-national (or supra-national) languages and the top candidate for this purpose is English. The number of people who speak it, either as their mother tongue or as a

second or foreign language, has increased more than 40 percent since the 1950s (Crystal 1989: 233), and it is the official or semi-official language in more than 60 countries over the six continents (Medgyes 1994: 1). Therefore, it is obvious that many of today's students will need a strong command of the English language to help them succeed in their chosen professions. In order to achieve this, they will need relevant and successful tuition. In this sense, we should become more critical regarding the parameters with which NTs and NNTs' competence have been traditionally measured: linguistic expertise versus teaching skills (Medgyes 1994: 59). The ideal situation would be, without any doubt, to combine both but this is not possible in many cases. Regarding this point, one of our PhD students (a British woman who has been teaching German and French in the UK) told us in a course on methodology that she considers that her teaching style has always been more significant than her command of the language when trying to achieve certain results from her students. As NNTs we understand perfectly what she means and also believe that the most important thing for a teacher, either native or non-native, is to facilitate the improvement of their student's own linguistic performance and cultural awareness through a whole range of techniques and approaches. The teacher's birthright is no longer a sufficient qualification for his/her capability to teach.

In the context of ESP, students need practice at using the vocabulary of their chosen field of study. Therefore, as we language teachers (either native or non-native) are not experts in these fields, it is necessary to encourage the students to work autonomously on aspects related to their subject. This work should include the use of the necessary computing and information gathering techniques at their disposal. Simulation exercises, set in the form of projects, form a suitable framework for this work, with the students being required to produce written reports and present them orally to the class under the guidance of the language teacher. A bonus from this approach would be the ability of the other students to view and evaluate each other's work. In this sense we know that the audience is very often receptive as the presenters do not only rehearse their command of English during the presentation, but also present relevant and specific information to their classmates that can be helpful for them later. Our work in this direction has shown that, with only an average command of language, students can present quite sophisticated information and material to their classmates.

When considering the simulation exercise approach we wanted to structure it in a way to satisfy three key concepts. These we identified as follows: 1. *Lenguaje en accion (language in action)* as described by Alcaraz (2000: 88-89), because we believe that the communicative competence is basic for our students' professional future; 2. *Interaction* as defined by Rivers (1988: 4); and 3. The *affective factor* explained by Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 47), most important to provide motivation. Offering our students work on suitable topics, using the four linguistic skills, together with guidance from the teacher and strong interaction with the rest of the class should produce a perfect combination of the three key concepts. As Rivers explains well, "students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages, that is, messages that contain information of interest to speaker and listener in a situation of importance for both" (1988: 4). Therefore, we knew that producing authentic material for the students to work with would be crucial to promote interaction among our students and would also be the key to success.

## **2. Project Work**

### **2.1. Setting**

The exercise was carried out at the School of Architecture and the School of Aeronautical Engineers, both in the Polytechnic University, a public institution, and also at two other Schools (Business and Law) from private entities (the European University and Comillas). All the Schools are placed in Madrid.

### **2.2. The Subjects Involved**

The students who were asked to work on simulation cases were studying different disciplines and were between 18 and 23 years old. The English course we teach is offered at different stages of their particular degree studies. The students' level of English varies, although most of them could be placed in between an intermediate and an advance level of English. The number of students per class is between 15 to 30.

### **2.3. Method**

At the beginning of the course we all asked our students to organize themselves in groups of 2 to 4 people in order to present their final projects at the end of the semester. We also planned a tentative schedule for several days and set up different sessions, so that we could avoid having more than 3 or 4 presentations in a row, as we know from experience that the students get tired and do not pay due attention after some time.

We also distributed an outline with explanatory instructions among our students and answered to their doubts and questions, so that the class knew well in advance what they had to do. We also asked them to choose a specific point of the project so that every member could be held responsible for a precise part. Besides, they were informed of the different types of devices they could use in the class to present their proposals: transparencies, slides, photographs, photocopies, power point, etc., and of the time every student had: between 10 and 15 minutes. The students did not like this as they thought that this was too long, but our experience from past years tells us that they usually need more time than that in many cases and often have to be asked to keep the presentation short in the end.

### **2.4. Implementation For The Project Work**

Besides indicating our students the steps of the project work at the beginning of the course we also tell them during the course how to get specific vocabulary for their presentations (eg. in dictionaries, websites, etc), and give them instructions on how to write a short paper as well<sup>1</sup>. More specifically, we focus on how to give an oral presentation in public and, therefore, spend time with this topic so that at the end of the semester everybody knows the basic points to consider when delivering a speech<sup>2</sup>.

Next, some of the simulation cases offered to our students by NTs and NNTs alike are presented and, afterwards, the results of the experience are analysed.

### 3. Simulation Cases Performed In The Class

#### 3.1. English For Architecture

**Prof. A.M. Martín Castillejos, School of Architecture, Polytechnic University, Madrid**

#### **APLICACIONES PROFESIONALES DE INGLÉS PARA ARQUITECTOS 2001-02 Rationale for the project:**

The project has been thought out for the students of *Aplicaciones Profesionales en Inglés para Arquitectos* (*English II*, upper-intermediate level) as part of their degree programme in Architecture. The course is optional but many students take it as the course helps them refresh and rehearse their knowledge of English. During the semester the students become familiarized with the basic rules to present their projects in international contests, something that many students do as a way to improve their C.V or/and gain experience in their fields of competence. This practice also helps them defend their proposals in other Schools of Architecture (ERASMUS students and/or participants in other exchange programmes).

#### **Information about an international contest:**

You are going to participate in an international contest organized by EUROPAN, a European architectural federation of national organizations, each of which organizes an architectural competition every year on a common theme and with common objectives. Rules and judging methods are identical for all the countries participating. The organization's main goal is to favour the exchange of ideas among the different European countries and at the same time to help young architects to develop and present their ideas in an international context.

In fact, EUROPAN addresses architects that work individually or within a team and that are younger than 40 years old before the contest's deadline. The teams may be composed of specialists on architecture, town planning, landscaping, engineering, etc., but the leader of each team will always be an architect.

The member countries of EUROPAN and the contest's organizers are: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Esthonia, Sweeden, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. In 2001-02 the contest theme is "*In between cities: architectural dynamics and new urbanity*", and the field of investigation chosen is "hybridity", the enhancement of existing qualities and architectural modernisation. A series of urban locations in different European towns is proposed to competitors. It is from these plots that competitors must choose the one(s) on which they want to submit their project(s). Competitors must register in the country of their choice. Each national competition has its own jury, a panel whose members designate the winners and runners-up to whom prizes are awarded. Prize-winning proposals are exhibited and published every year.

#### **Intructions and learning objectives:**

The documentation that the contestants must prepare in order to participate in the EUROPAN contest comprises:

? **Research work:** you are expected to do some research about the city and the place where your project will be built. The project can involve any of the countries members of EUROPAN. You will also have to be especially careful when quoting your

sources of information (books, magazines, articles in newspapers, etc. - 80% at least in English-). – **Emphasis on reading skills**

? **Writing section:** you will have to explain your project and justify it in a short essay (minimum: eight to ten double-spaced pages per team). In this section you will have to pay particular attention to the grammar issues studied in class. – **Emphasis on writing skills.**

? **Drawing section:** the graphic part is essential to explain your proposal as this is an architectural project. Nevertheless, remember that you can use and adapt former projects for this occasion.

Together with the written and graphic information you will also have to include an envelope with your C.V. so that the jury can consider former merits.

At the end of the semester you will have to explain your proposal orally to the whole class. Each member of a team will have about 15 minutes to present their own part. During the presentation of the proposals each team will have to give answers to specific aspects, such as where and when to build (site location -site survey-, and time scheduled), justification for the design and structural options chosen, dimensions of the construction, materials used, access to the site, fire service, possible factors affecting the schedule, maximum and minimum cost of the project and justification, and composition of the design team or individuals in charge of the different parts. –**Emphasis on speaking skills**

The rest of the class will listen to the different proposals and will write comments about your presentation on a evaluation sheet. – **Emphasis on listening skills.**

There is a special emphasis on a particular skill in every part of the project as we want our students to put into practice the four typical skills when learning a language (reading, writing, speaking and listening) while preparing the simulation case.

### **3.2. Business English**

**Prof. Julie Ockley, European University, Madrid**

#### **BUSINESS ENGLISH (INTERMEDIATE LEVEL) 2000-01**

##### **Self-Study Project: Internet Project**

##### **Rationale for this project:**

This project has been designed for university students who are studying *Business English* (intermediate level) as part of their degree programme in Business Management. They are required to pass levels 3 and 4 (the highest level we offer at the university at present). The course lasts 3 months with 4 hours of tuition a week. I designed the course syllabus together with a colleague. As an examination requirement, we decided that, as part of the oral test, the students should make an oral presentation, since it is now widely accepted that this is one of the main means of communicating information in a personal (face-to-face) and rapid way (Bathia, 1993; Goodale, 1998; Swales, 1990). We also wanted them to use the Internet as a working tool within the course since familiarity with the professional possibilities which the Internet offers is an essential skill.

### **Instructions for implementation and learning objectives:**

The project is introduced at the beginning of the course and should continue throughout the course culminating in the individual oral presentation of a chosen Spanish company to the whole class. What follows is:

I. Students receive the written instructions from the teacher (objective: reading comprehension in English, familiarization with instructions and vocabulary through active means)

II. Students then follow the instructions to carry out the task of creating a virtual portfolio and investing virtual money. They should also find out background information and statistics on a company of their choice and trace and analyze its performance over the past 5 years (objective: to familiarize students with a) the website [www.ubs.com](http://www.ubs.com) which is a website for virtual investment; b) the use of the Internet for obtaining useful professional information which can then be used as background preparation for the final task; c) topic-specific lexis, by using a real-life tool - i.e. not a simulated classroom activity).

III. The final evaluated task is for each student to give a short (10 minutes) oral presentation before the whole class on the performance of their virtual portfolio and to talk about his/her chosen company (objective: to do an oral exam in English; to practise oral presentation skills, including techniques on how to give a good oral presentation in any language, i.e. use of space, visual aids, voice projection, eye contact, etc.)

### **3.3. Legal English**

***Prof. Holly Vass, Comillas University, Madrid***

#### **INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH FOR LEGAL PURPOSES 2000-01**

#### **Instructions for your Final Project:**

Law is a reflection of a society's values, customs and beliefs. Some famous trials, as a result of the court's construction of the law, have had far-reaching impacts on the legal system, society and public opinion. You will research a recent trial (from the late XXth or the XXIst century) whose impact on the legal system or notoriety has made it world-famous, and then you will report your findings to the class in the form of a group presentation after Easter. On an individual basis, you will write a paper on your opinion of the trial and its impact to be handed in no later than May 15.

#### **Procedure:**

I. Research a famous trial from US or UK history from the list below:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ? The O.J. Simpson trial  | ? The Napster Case   |
| ? The Mississippi Burning trial   | ? The Microsoft Anti-Trust Trial                             |
| ? The British Au Pair Case (Nanny Murder Trial)                         | ? State vs. Scopes (The Scopes Monkey Trial)                 |
| ? Miranda vs. Arizona (The Miranda Warning Trial)                       | ? The Titanic Trial  |
| ? The Guildford Four Trial (The <i>In the Name of the Father</i> Trial) | ? Choose another trial, but check your choice with me first! |

II. The presentation should last no more than 50 minutes. Each person in your group should participate equally. Prepare a single outline of the complete

presentation and a glossary containing key legal concepts, making enough copies for each student in the class. You will hand the outline and glossary out to the other students at the beginning of the class. You should use transparencies and other visual aids to illustrate your presentation. You will have to include the following topics in your presentation: history and chronology of events leading up to the trial, legal or sociological implications of the trial, evidence and how it was gathered, legal proceedings (the defence and prosecution arguments and key witnesses), verdict, sentence, and finally, one or two good discussion questions to encourage class interaction. These questions can be proposed at the beginning and end of your presentation.

III. Summarise in writing, in a maximum of 2 sheets of paper, the following points:

- ? What is your opinion of the trial itself and its legal or sociological implications?
- ? What have you learned by carrying out this project?

#### **Research tools:**

Some of the best information about these trials can be found on the Internet. The following reputable sites are suggested:

Legal information	<a href="http://www.jurist.law.pitt.edu">www.jurist.law.pitt.edu</a>
on-technical language	<a href="http://www.courttv.com">www.courttv.com</a>
	<a href="http://www.zeal.com/Government/Law/Famous_Cases_Trials/">www.zeal.com/Government/Law/Famous_Cases_Trials/</a>
U.K. Law online	<a href="http://www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn">www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn</a>
Online encyclopaedias	<a href="http://www.britannica.com">www.britannica.com</a> // <a href="http://www.infoplease.com">www.infoplease.com</a>
Titanic trial	<a href="http://www.andersonkill.com/titanic/">www.andersonkill.com/titanic/</a>

### **3.4. Aeronautical English**

***Prof. Verónica Vivanco Cervera, School of Aeronautics, Polytechnic University, Madrid***

**"IDIOMA TÉCNICO MODERNO"**  
**2000-01**

#### **Lecture Simulation:**

The following tailor-made project has been designed for undergraduates of the second year course (*Idioma Técnico Moderno*) at the *Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingenieros Aeronáuticos*. In order to pass the aforementioned subject, the students have to simulate a lecture about aviation security, a topic which, unfortunately, is of foremost importance since September 11th. This event has had a great impact on our students, so we think that in this way we may strengthen the affective bond between them and the English language, as we believe in the importance of enhancing the students' love for their field of study. At the same time the simulation undertaken in the classroom constitutes a real life event for any aeronautical engineer.

The subsequent themes are offered in class and assigned to each different group: audits for aviation security, procedures for airport security identification, handling of hazardous materials such as anthrax, ramp safety training, customs security and safety procedures.

Since safety and security constitute different concepts, the students must deal with them reaching various goals:

### *Safety:*

? Strategic goals: how to reduce fatal aircraft accident rate due to mechanic failures (fatalities and losses by accident or by occupant risk, trying to reduce in this latter case the risk of mortality).

? Performance goals: reduce commercial air carrier fatal aircraft rate, diminish general aviation fatal accidents, reduce the number of runway incursions and the rate of operational errors.

### *Security:*

? Strategic goals: reduce criminal or terrorist attacks which result in hijack, sabotage, bombings, aircraft piracy, or attacks within secured areas; detect explosive devices and weapons that may be taken aboard aircraft.

? Performance goals: prevent unauthorized access to aircraft.

### **Process:**

In the briefing stage, the students collect the required information, going on to the action stage in which they give a lecture to their classmates who play the role of audience. The last phase consists of a discussion in the class; in this latter stage the technical specifications give way to the personal feelings towards terrorism and the impact the recent attacks against the USA have had on the aeronautical industry (this clearly leads to a smaller number of positions available for our future engineers). Although in this part of the process the technical information may be put aside, we do not see it as a problem since the warm-up is highly effective to have all the class participating.

### **Evaluation:**

The proposals will be finally evaluated in relation to the following criteria:

- ? Information objectives: clear and complete information
- ? Linguistic objectives: fluent, brief and accurate verbal communication
- ? Research objectives: innovation, usefulness, solution to problems

## **4. Evaluation Of The Simulation Cases ~ Presentations**

As we mentioned above, before asking our students to present the simulation cases in class we gave them plenty of information about what aspects they should consider in order to do it properly aspects such as body language, voice, use of visuals, audience rapport, language use, etc. We also watched part of a couple of videos in class regarding oral presentations that we analysed in detail (Comfort and Utley 1995; Goodale 1998). So, when the occasion to deliver the presentations arrived, we decided to give every student an evaluation sheet where they had to write comments on the different performances. Our purpose was: first, to make the students pay attention to the different presentations because, sometimes, they were distracted and nervous about their own intervention and did not pay proper attention; second, to make them put into practice what they had previously learned in the class regarding an ideal oral presentations and third, to value the purpose of the activity more. The evaluation sheet was graded and given back to the students, so that the students took the task seriously.



Our students' remarks (in the evaluation sheets) regarding the presentation of the cases helped us see that they had especially appreciated the following aspects:

- ? The provision of a clear outline of the presentation's main points.
- ? The explanation of the relevance of the subject matter
- ? The signalling of subjects that were ahead but the presenter/s anticipated.
- ? Eye-contact with the audience
- ? Loudness when speaking
- ? Proper body language
- ? The visual support of the points presented and the existence of a certain balance between text and pictures
- ? The relevance of the graphic material presented
- ? Some type of interaction at the end of their presentation that they found encouraging

On the other hand, the most common mistakes during the students' performances had to do with

- ? Use of distracting accents
- ? Failure to pause when speaking
- ? Excessive hesitation
- ? Lack of a proper structure and lack of anticipation of the presentation's main points
- ? Lack of self-confidence when presenting their topics and, as a consequence, lack of eye-contact and good rapport with the audience
- ? Improper use of visual devices
- ? Use of too little/ too much visual information
- ? Failure to keep the attention of all the students when interaction was taking place, especially for those students who had to make their presentation next.

Therefore, when performing the simulation cases in the class we followed the three different stages proposed by Wilkinson, Swaak and Foster (1992: 205): the "briefing stage", where the explanatory instructions to carry out the task were given; the "action stage" where the simulations cases were presented, and the "debriefing stage" where performances were discussed.

There is no need to say that, despite the problems quoted above we consider the experience very positive: the students applied their knowledge of English in their professional fields, learned new general and specific vocabulary, spoke in public, had to hand in a short paper on the topic chosen, etc. A possible problem to avoid, though, that we all noticed is the temptation to evaluate better a "good performance" in a simulation case (regarding body language and technical devices used) than a worse one where the linguistics and lexical aspects have been more deeply studied and considered.

Nevertheless, what is most interesting for us is that, when commenting our results with the NTs we could see that the experience had had similar results and we all had dealt with similar difficulties like the ones mentioned above.

## **5. Conclusions**

We believe that the presentation of these simulation cases helps our students improve their English skills and also makes them rehearse a situation very likely to happen in their near professional future. Besides that, we know that during their academic life, many of our students who participate in exchange programmes with other universities have to present (and defend) different types of proposals/projects

when attending classes in foreign countries. Even if they do not enrol in programmes abroad, the students have to present their projects in front of other teachers and professionals in Spanish, so that the oral techniques they learn in our classes also serve them in this context.

In conclusion, we have had encouraging results using the technique of setting simulation exercises and getting the students to work on these autonomously as far as the work related to their specialist fields is concerned. Furthermore, the experience showed us it was right to advocate that our teaching skills are as important as our linguistic expertise in helping our students to progress. Both NTs and NNTs often have to face very similar problems when helping their students improve their English, as these simulation activities prove. NTs can certainly be more helpful regarding specific problems, such as distracting accents or idiomatic expressions, but aspects such as speech structure, the use of visual devices and the inclusion of suitable specific vocabulary and information, can be corrected by NTs and NNTs alike.

We advocate doing further research into this area to enable the results we are finding to be confirmed so that this type of approach can be adopted as a more widespread teaching practice alongside other new techniques related to ESP, such as learning through computers. In particular, because this technique works equally well for both NT and NNT teachers in their work to help their students to be competent communicators.

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<sup>1</sup> In this respect, books like those by Leki and Turkenik, quoted in the works cited section of this article, can be very useful.

<sup>2</sup> There are helpful videos and books regarding oral presentations. Some examples are the teacher's guides and videocassettes published by Leo Jones and Richard Alexander (2000) or by Malcolm Goodale (1998), both included in the worked cited section. Ferguson (1997) also has interesting things to say on this topic.